

OCCUPATIONS

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precious Book. As soon as one made a little progress he was required to go out and teach others. In this way schools sprang up all over the country wherever the people turned to the Christian teaching. Teachers were much respected. They were addressed as *Thra*. With the increase of education went an increase in the standards of training. Many of them were called to go to Upper Burma and teach in schools run by private agencies, by missions and by the Education Department of Government. In the spreading of the Christian teaching among many of the outlying tribes of Upper Burma and the Chin Hills the Karen teachers played a very important part, often undergoing the same hardships that foreign teachers had to bear among more primitive tribes.

During recent years the Karens have taken up all occupations. Their more general education and newly-developed adaptability to take on new ways have given them openings in offices as clerks, in the police, in the army where they have played an important part even as they have in the professions. A number of Karens have taken up medicine, among the most distinguished of whom was Sir San C Po, of Bassein.

Young Karen women have made a name for themselves as nursemaids. Their gentle ways and general reliability have made them most popular and many of them have cared for children of European officers. Several of them have been to England and America. They have also done very well as regular registered nurses in the hospitals and there was hardly a hospital in Burma in which there was not one, or more, Karen nurse. Their work on the whole has been very satisfactory.

With the coming of machinery the Karens have taken

THE ORIGIN OF THE KAREN

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speech. Dr. D. C. Gilmore believes that the Pwo dialect branched off from the parent stem earlier than the Sgaw, but kept the original nasals and, being in closer contact with outside races, adopted more outside words.⁹ The Sgaw has dropped the final nasals, because they were more difficult to pronounce, but has kept the original form of the language to a greater extent than the Pwo.

The fact that the Karen have used bronze drums for many generations has, I think, a bearing on their racial relationship. These remarkable drums have only recently been studied by Western scholars, and their full significance is still a matter for investigation. These drums were formerly thought to be of Chinese origin, but it seems that they are to be attributed to aboriginal tribes, found in what is now Tong King and Yunnan by the Chinese generals, Ma Yuon (41, A.D.) and Chu-Ko Liang (230, A.D.), who conquered these territories for the Chinese.¹⁰

The upper portion of Camboja is now considered to be the original home of these drums. They formed part of the possessions of the chiefs and were considered very precious, each being worth from eight to ten oxen. Chu-ko Liang is reported to have exacted sixty-three bronze drums as tribute from the barbarians and to have taken them back with him. Among the peoples of Burma the Karen seem to be the only race that has made use of these drums. They do not manufacture them, but buy them from the more industrious Shans, who do not appear to set much store by them.¹¹ Among the Karen, until recent times, the owner of one of these instruments was considered of more worth than a man who had seven elephants. A drum often formed the ransom of a village or the dowry of a maiden. Although so valued a possession often belongs to a chief, it may belong to any one who can purchase it.

It may have been from the Karen that the Chinese generals exacted part or all of their tribute. If so, this people was living in the mountains of Yunnan at the beginning of the Christian era.

⁹ D. C. Gilmore, "Phonetic Changes in the Karen Languages" in *Journal, Burma Research Society*, Vol. VIII, Pt. II, pp. 122, ff.

¹⁰ Several pamphlets and articles in anthropological journals deal with these drums. The most extensive work on the subject, which is in German, is by Franz Heger and is entitled *Alte Metallbronzen aus Suedost-Asien*, Leipzig 1902. An excellent short work entitled "Anciens Tambours de Bronze," is by H. Parmentier and is printed in the *Bulletin l'Ecole d'Extreme-Orient*, Hanoi, 118. See also Chapter XIII on Bronze Drums, pp. 112-124.

¹¹ W. W. Cochrane, in *The Shans*, mentions the Shan towns of Tagung or Ta Kawng and Mogang or Mong Kawng as denoting, respectively, Drum Ferry and Drum Town, and on page 62 he says: "They took also a palace drum, whose reverberations could call the people together, daunt enemies, or bring rain in time of drought." He makes no further reference to their use.

THE KAREN PEOPLE OF BURMA

531 of color and design is practically limited to the woven patterns of
531 some of their garments. They have only a scant vocabulary for
192 colors. I have seldom heard them remark on the beauty of a sunset
or the glories of a sunrise. Sometimes they have called attention
to a pleasing landscape, but I have wondered whether they were
not doing so because they knew of my pleasure in such scenes.

571 The Karen is a plebeian. His manners at home are crude, al-
609 though he is not without a certain personal dignity. His shy-
ness in the presence of strangers, especially of those whom he
fears, causes him embarrassment. Under such circumstances he
often impresses one as being impolite. He is not servile. It has
never been his custom to "shiko".³ The greatest chief is a comrade
[554] among his men, who do not yield their self-respect in his presence.
Nevertheless, the inherent timidity of the race shows itself in the
avoidance of making a request in person. A request may expose
the one making it to the chagrin of a refusal and the one addressed
to the unpleasant necessity of giving an adverse answer. The Karen,
therefore, gets a friend to act as his intermediary. Even a boy who
wants to buy a book will have his classmate get it for him.

152 Amiability is another marked trait of the Karen, both of the
177 educated and the uneducated, rendering them acceptable in many
462 kinds of service. Young Karen women are in demand as nurse-
maids all over Burma, and not a few have gone temporarily to
England and America in that capacity. They are kind, patient, and
faithful in their care of the children entrusted to their care.

000 The remarkable chastity of the Karen is also worthy of notice.
It has, however, been mentioned in several places in this work
and perhaps need not be discussed further in this connection, except
to say that the fear of the evil consequences of violating the laws
of the elders has kept them free from many unhealthy customs
that are found in many parts of the world.⁴

³ "Shiko" is a Burmese word signifying the act of worship, or of showing respect to
officials.

⁴ See pages 139, 142, 192, 298.

565 But these forms of wealth brought with them only more or less
554 prestige within the single stratum comprising the entire community.

476 There was little occasion for individual initiative among the
[554] Karen, on account of the important part played by communal activity amongst them. One could claim no particular credit for his deeds of blood on a raid. That belonged rather to the organizer and leader of the foray. One never set out on a journey or attempted any special work alone. In some sections it was the custom for the chief to beat a gong or blow a horn as the signal to go to the fields. Every one went at the signal. None would go without it. If a supply of fish was wanted, instead of an individual taking his or her rod and going alone to catch them, the whole village, or as many of its members as were free to do so, would join in a fishing expedition, first gathering the herbs to poison the water if the fish were to be taken in that way, or carrying along their funnel-shaped baskets with which to work the bottom of a shallow stream, or going prepared to resort to whatever other method they thought suitable to the time and place. Likewise hunting was commonly conducted as a drive for game in which all might participate, at least all the men; and a motley variety of implements was brought out for the purpose, including nets, crossbows, spears, knives, and perhaps an old rusty gun. Thus they hunted and fished together, as they often do still. Even those who failed to go were not left out in the division of the spoils, if they managed to be present at the proper time, and they usually did.

476 This communal sharing was so much the order of the day that
421 personal rights were more or less disregarded. If a man got a
311 few seeds and planted a garden near his house, he was fortunate, as is sometimes still the case in the hills, if he gathered half the crop he had planted. His neighbors, asking no leave, helped themselves generously without hesitation and perhaps without intending to steal.

423 While one's personal rights were thus disregarded, they were
685 not entirely ignored. A man's field or "hkü" and his betel gardens were his own; and his paddy-bins, which may have been built in the jungle a mile from the village, were respected. If he marked with a bunch of grass a tree in which he had discovered a hive of wild bees, no one would attempt to rob it of its honey. Many of the Karen people are like children in their regard for the rights of other persons: they understand and abide by the law of established